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IMPLEMENTATION OF LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMS IN BUSINESS EDUCATION: CHALLENGES AND OUTCOMES

In the context of a transforming labor market and growing demand for soft skills, the development of leadership competencies in business education is becoming increasingly relevant. In the 21st century, the need for a new type of manager – capable of operating in conditions of uncertainty, making responsible decisions, and leading teams – has necessitated a rethinking of traditional business education approaches. Higher education institutions face the challenge of integrating a practice-oriented approach to cultivating these skills. Particularly during the war with Russia, the implementation of leadership development programs in Ukrainian business education holds critical significance for several key reasons. The war has posed new demands on managers – requiring the ability to act under uncertainty, make strategic decisions, and inspire teams in crisis. Leadership development is thus vital to preparing specialists who can lead post-war reconstruction, reform, and economic modernization efforts.

Ukraine needs leaders focused on trust, public service, sustainable development, and transparent governance. Higher education can become a breeding ground for this new leadership culture – through educational programs, mentorship, and social projects. During the war, Higher education institutions have evolved beyond academic institutions, transforming into hubs of change, innovation, and solidarity, engaging in volunteer, strategic, and crisis initiatives. In this context, leadership development is an investment in the university's capacity to influence national processes. Leadership courses typically include components of emotional intelligence, self-reflection, and crisis response. This is especially critical for young people living and studying in wartime- helping them build internal resilience, take responsibility, and act despite fear.

Illustrates the gradual shift from isolated initiatives to systemic implementation of leadership development programs in Ukrainian business education, particularly in response to war-related challenges and the need for national recovery (figure 1). The integration of modern leadership programs can elevate Ukrainian business education to the international level - attracting partners, and creating competitive programs centered on values, innovation, and effective governance amid change.

Higher education institutions offering master's programs in management, economics, and public administration are increasingly embedding leadership development modules into students' academic trajectories. Thus, the primary objective of our research is to analyze the specifics of implementing leadership development programs in higher education institutions and identify major challenges through examples of effective practices.

Key current challenges include the formalization of soft skills in curricula: difficulties in assessment, uncertainty in methodological approaches, a lack of faculty with practical leadership experience, and student resistance to non-traditional formats (e.g., trainings, simulations, case

studies). Additionally, the leadership topic is often addressed in a fragmented manner – existing as electives or subtopics rather than integrated parts of the educational program.

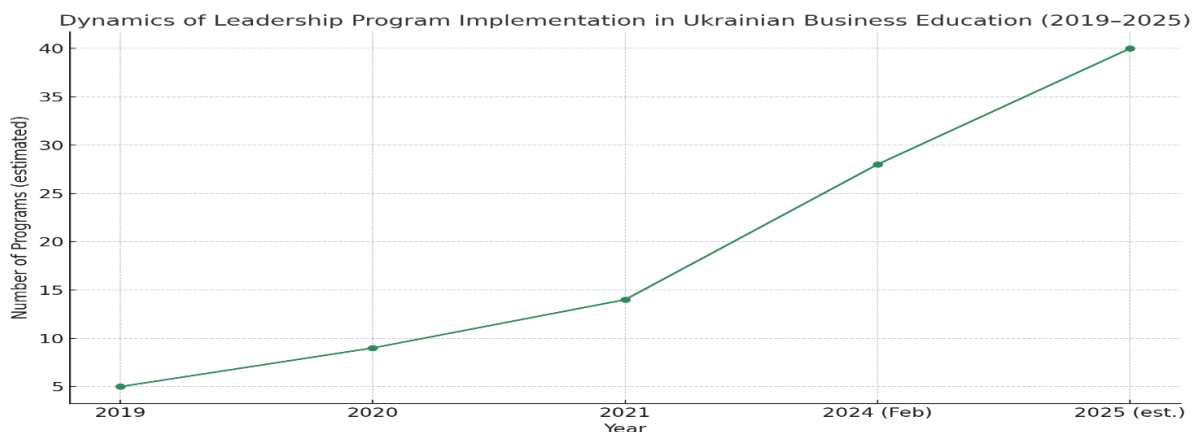


Figure 1. Dynamics of leadership program implementation in Ukrainian business education from 2019 to 2025. The graph shows a significant increase in the number of programs, particularly after February 2024, due to national recovery initiatives.

Examples of leadership development implementation in higher education include:

Kyiv School of Economics (KSE): Launching the «Leadership and Decision-Making» course with a focus on crisis management and interpersonal communication (involving business speakers).

Lviv Business School at the Ukrainian Catholic University (LvBS): Integration of modules like «Emotional Intelligence for Leaders» and «Servant Leadership» into its MBA program.

National University of Kyiv-Mohyla Academy: Piloting a course titled «Leadership in Action,» where students work on team-based social projects under faculty and entrepreneur mentorship throughout a semester.

There is a pressing need for interdisciplinary integration of subjects including psychology, communication, and strategic thinking. We advocate for combining academic content with practical formats – such as trainings, business simulations, and mentoring. Business and public sector mentors should be involved to bring real-world management experience. Elements of leadership should be integrated into all business courses via teamwork, role-playing, and project-based learning. It is important to adopt an institutional approach to leadership development – through career centers, leadership labs, acceleration programs, and by enhancing faculty qualifications with a focus on facilitation, emotional intelligence, and coaching approaches.

In conclusion, leadership development programs in higher education can serve as powerful tools to prepare a new generation of managers – with critical thinking, emotional maturity, and strategic vision. Leadership in business education is not just a skill that enhances graduate competitiveness; it is a mechanism for shaping a new management culture. Effective implementation of leadership programs requires a strategic approach, interdisciplinary collaboration, and sustainable partnerships between universities, businesses, and society.

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